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## EXPOSITORY AND PRACTICAL STUDIES ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST

### XXXII. BARTIMAEUS AND ZACCHAEUS

LUKE 18:35-19:10<sup>1</sup>

#### I. THE TWO NARRATIVES

There are two distinct and unrelated narratives here. Jesus was near the end of his last journey to Jerusalem; he had been definitely rejected in Galilee and Perea; his death was less than a fortnight away at Calvary. He crossed the Jordan and entered Judea by way of Jericho, the "City of Palms."

1. *Bartimaeus*, a blind beggar, sat by the wayside near the gate of Jericho; Jesus met him there, either on entering the city (Luke) or on leaving it (Matthew and Mark). The blind man heard the noise of the crowd, asked what it meant, and was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing. He cried out loudly, was rebuked by the crowd, but continued to cry till Jesus stopped and asked that the man be brought nearer. Jesus then asked the man what he wanted, heard his earnest plea for eyesight, and graciously granted his petition. The effect on Bartimaeus and the crowd alike was thrilling.

2. *Zacchaeus* was a rich Jew, a publican living near Jericho. He wanted to see Jesus and, being short of stature, climbed into a tree to see him pass. When Jesus reached the place and saw Zacchaeus, he asked him to hasten down and said that he would abide at his house. The people were shocked at Jesus' becoming the guest of this hated person. Zacchaeus, however, showed the spirit of a genuinely converted man, pledged his possessions to charity, and promised Jesus to make restitution for wrong dealing. Jesus declared him a saved man, and asserted that his own mission was to seek and to save the lost.

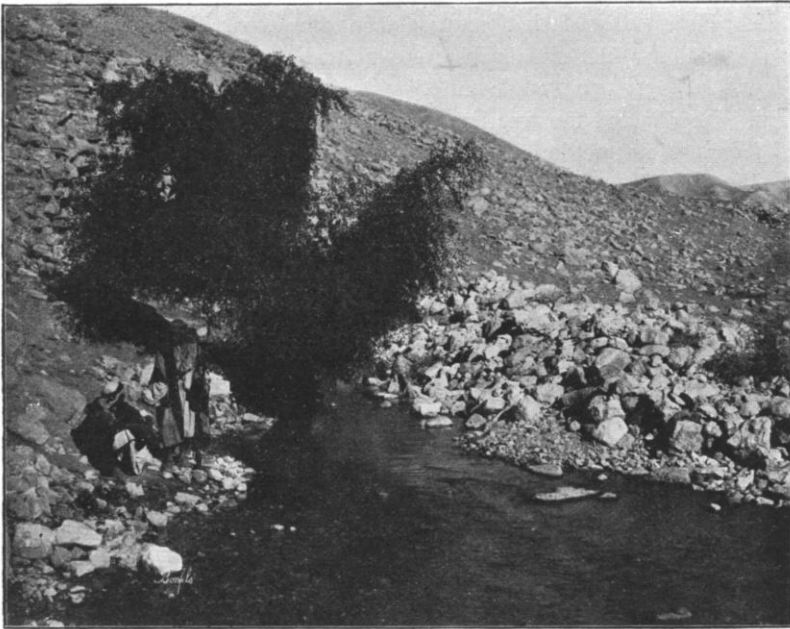
#### II. EXPOSITION

*Luke 18:35-43, Bartimaeus.*—Vs. 35, "he was come nigh": Matthew and Mark say that Jesus met Bartimaeus on leaving the city; Luke says on entering. Matthew says there were two beggars; Mark and Luke say, one. These discrepancies are too slight to prove anything except the absence of collusion.

<sup>1</sup> International Sunday-School Lesson for September 2, 1906.

Vs. 36, "hearing the multitude": The crowd may have been composed in part of pilgrims to the Holy City, as Jesus was, to keep the Passover.

Vss. 37, 38: they said, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by;" Bartimaeus said, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me": The crowd see in Jesus only the townsman; the beggar sees the Messiah. The latter's accent falls on "me," for fear he would be overlooked in the crowd.



ELISHA'S FOUNTAIN, JERICO

Vs. 39, "they rebuked him, but he cried so much the more": Great chances often come unexpectedly and but once. The opposition of the crowd only increased the beggar's insistence.

Vs. 41: The beggar's eager earnestness is revealed in the term "Rabboni," which is most reverential. Mark adds that "he cast away his coat, sprang up and came to Jesus."

Vs. 42, "thy faith hath saved thee": This is the most important fact in the story. Did Jesus mean that the man's faith was the ground on which God healed him, or that his faith pointed to a state of soul that had curative power in it, or that it was his faith in the healer's power to heal that made him insistent to the point of success?

*Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus.*—Vs. 2: This man was a rich, chief publican. Jericho was a rich field for taxes.

Vs. 3. He likely had heard reports of Jesus, and now “sought to see him.”

Vs. 4: His interest is seen in overcoming obstacles, for he climbed to where he could get a good view.

Vs. 5: Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name in a familiar way, and invites himself to be the man’s guest, all of which seems out of keeping with Zacchaeus’ apparent lack of acquaintance with Jesus. Possibly some little incidents that would explain this were omitted in telling the story.

Vs. 6: Zacchaeus “made haste.” The words of Jesus had transformed him. He climbed the tree from curiosity. He was thrilled by the call of Jesus. He came down and received him joyfully.

Vs. 7: “They all murmured” indicates the popular view of a social visit with a person universally condemned.

Vs. 8, “the half of my goods I give”: This was not his practice, but is now his determination. “If I have taken anything,” etc.: The “if” does not express doubt, but is a supposition according to facts. He had taken things by false accusation, but he will now restore them.

Vs. 9: The change in Zacchaeus meant the salvation of his spirit from wrong aims.

Vs. 10: This passage puts this incident right in line with the mission of Jesus to save the lost.

### III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FOUR SERMONS

In building a sermon on this material, one may give the prominence to Jesus, who is the central figure of these gospel stories; or one may give it to Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus, who are of secondary importance.

Theme 1: Jesus in relation to human need. Text, Luke 18:38: “Jesus, have mercy on me.”

Theme 2: Bartimaeus, or the will as the seat of character. Text, Luke 18:42: “Thy faith hath saved thee.”

1. Is salvation an arbitrary thing?
2. Does it follow from a state of character in us?
3. The will to believe, as a practical conclusion.

Theme 3. The mission of Jesus. Text: “The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost.”

1. The lost sinner.
2. The seeking Savior.
3. The saved soul.

Theme 4: Zacchaeus, or the fruits of conversion. Text, Luke 19:8.

1. The deep and radical change of heart. Enlarge on the man's standards, temptations, associates, past habits, etc.
2. His new view of property: use it for others.
3. His new view of persons—restitution.

LINCOLN HULLEY

DELAND, FLA.

### XXXIII. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY AND THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

MATT. 21:1-17<sup>2</sup>

#### I. EXPOSITION

If the crucifixion of Jesus took place on the fourteenth day of Nisan, the triumphal entry must be assigned to the ninth day. Jesus had probably gone directly from Jericho to Bethany and spent the sabbath there with friends.

"Bethphage": Position and name are alike doubtful.

"Spoken of by the prophet": The passage referred to is quoted from Zach. 9:9, and it is quoted freely, though in condensed form. Evidently the evangelist had in mind also Isa. 62:11, from which he adopts the introductory expression: "Tell ye the daughter of Zion," etc.

"Hosanna" is the Greek form of the Hebrew phrase occurring in Ps. 118:25 and meaning "O save." Gradually it came to be used as a mere acclaiming expression of the highest good feeling. Perhaps the following would convey the actual meaning: "May the richest blessings of heaven be showered upon thy head."

The deliberate preparation for the entry into Jerusalem and the intentional publicity, so contrary to Christ's usual habits are very remarkable, and can be explained only on the ground that he was now assuming frankly and openly the character and claims of the Messiah and presenting himself to the people as "king of the Jews."

After the disciples had followed out his instructions and procured the colt, the procession started toward the city, accompanied by a constantly increasing throng of people. Part of the crowd had come with him from Galilee; part streamed from Bethany excited by the recent resurrection of Lazarus. Some went before him, some followed. As they advanced they were met by a fresh crowd pouring forth from Jerusalem. John records that they came out with palm branches in their hands, as if to salute a king with the symbols of triumph. The spreading of their garments in the road was an oriental mark of honor and respect to kings on

<sup>2</sup> International Sunday-School Lesson for September 9, 1906.

their entering into cities. The people appear to have behaved on this occasion as if aroused by enthusiasm to unpremeditated action. Of the three routes which lay before him, Jesus is supposed to have taken the southern, or most frequented, between the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offense. "As they approached the shoulder of the hill," says Dr. Geikie, "where the road bends downward to the north, the sparse vegetation of the eastern slope changed, as in a moment, to the rich green of garden and trees, and Jerusalem in its glory rose before them." It may have been at that very moment that the enthusiasm of the multitude found expression in the ringing "Hosannas." It is no wonder that the whole city, whose streets were thronged by pilgrims drawn by the feast, should have been deeply stirred by such a vociferous demonstration. The Romans were constantly expecting some public rising; the pharisaical party was aroused to new envy and malice; the Herodians dreaded a possible usurper; but the rank and file of the people doubtless entertained for the brief and fleeting moment the idea that their hopes were now fulfilled, and that their long-desired Messiah had at last appeared and would lead them to victory. On every side rang out the question, "Who is this?" and from the multitude came back the answer: "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth."

It is apparent from Mark's narrative that on this day of triumph Jesus entered the temple, but merely "looked around about on all things," and then returned for the night to Bethany, visiting the temple again on the following (Monday) morning and driving out those who profaned it. The part of the temple which he purged of its profane uses was the court of the gentiles, separated from the other courts by a stone partition, and considered of less sanctity. In this large open space a market had been established, with the connivance, and probably to the pecuniary emolument, of the priests. Here was sold all that was required for the sacrifices which worshipers desired to offer—animals for victims, meal, incense, salt, etc. The money-changers exchanged for a percentage foreign money and other coins for the half-shekel demanded from all adults for the service of the temple. The sellers also probably played into their hands by refusing to receive any but current Jewish money in exchange for their wares. The doves were used by the poor in place of the costly victims.

The details of the expulsion are not given, but Jesus in this act vindicated once again the sanctity of the House of God, and placed his most emphatic disapproval for all time on the slightest attempt to commercialize religion. It is no wonder that "the blind and lame" flocked to him for healing; and when even the children sang their "Hosannas" in the

temple, it is not strange that the conventional religious leaders were sore displeased. To their criticisms Jesus quotes from Ps. 8 as his only answer.

## II. SUGGESTIONS FOR SERMONS

### I. The triumphal entry.

Theme: The significance of the triumphal entry.

1. To Jesus: a formal and public announcement of his Messiahship.
2. To the people: an emotional acceptance of him as their king that proved to be meaningless.
3. To the religious leaders: a serious obstacle to the continuance of traditional religion that they foresaw must be removed.
4. To the reverent soul, then and now: the possibility of complete surrender to one worthy to rule as Lord supreme.

### II. The cleansing of the temple.

Theme: The commercializing of religion today.

1. The commercializing of the *pulpit*: (a) by ignorance; (b) by wealth; (c) by sins of the pew.
2. The commercializing of the *church*: (a) by the condoning of the moral and social sins of its influential members; (b) by the acceptance of "tainted money."
3. The commercializing of the *religious press*: (a) by ignorant or non-progressive subscribers; (b) by fraudulent advertisers.

J. HERMAN RANDALL

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

## XXXIV. JESUS SILENCES THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

MARK 12:13-27<sup>3</sup>

### I. EXPOSITION

Three representative parties of the Jews appear in our study. The Pharisees were repudiators of foreign rule, without being extremists. They were pure theocrats, who maintained that God alone should rule his people. "They are the personified genius of Judaism." The Herodians were upholders of the interests of the Herods in Judea and Samaria, which had been governed by Roman procurators since the deposition of Archelaus in 6 A. D. The people of God regarded it as an insult to them to be compelled to pay their taxes directly to a heathen master. In the dominions of Herod Antipas and Philip his brother taxes were not paid

<sup>3</sup> International Sunday-School Lesson for September, 16, 1906.

directly to Rome. The Herodians were opposed to the pure theocracy of the Pharisees and, in a very politic way, to the Roman procuratorship. Their supreme interest was the restoration of the Herodian dynasty to power over all Palestine. They were, however, adverse to any revolutionary method that might interfere with their cherished political ambitions. They were careful to show themselves favorable to Rome. The Sadducees made up the Jewish hereditary priestly aristocracy. They were influential officially, but with the people as a whole they were surpassed by the Pharisees, who were the true popular leaders. They rejected the belief in a resurrection, in angels, and in spirits. The leaven of the Sadducees was the spirit of satisfaction with the present conditions of life, which involved indifference to religion except as a matter of useful custom. In these three parties the entire nation, practically, arrayed itself against Jesus.

The Pharisees and Herodians try to catch Jesus by means of a practical political question. If Jesus answered in the negative, he could be convicted as a revolutionist and so be found guilty of treason. If he answered in the affirmative, he could be regarded as being in sympathy with the Romans, which would lose for him the confidence of the people. Then, too, such an answer could be interpreted as a repudiation on his part of all his messianic claims; for in the mind of the Jews the Messiah was a nationalist. Jesus detects the purpose of the question. He sees that once more he is being asked to play the rôle of a political Messiah. He refuses to be caught by the hunters. Their flattery cannot deceive him.

His answer does not separate men's duties as citizens from their duties to God. Men can be ardent patriots and at the same time be disloyal to God by their selfishness. Men can easily over-emphasize the importance of being free politically. Fundamentally there is no conflict between paying Caesar what is due him and paying God what is due him. Duties never conflict. Jesus taught the questioners a needed lesson without entangling himself in the snare set by the enemy.

The question of the Sadducees was speculative. They thought they had a case that would make any teaching on the future life ridiculous and untenable. "They sought to discredit the resurrection by reducing it to an absurdity." They quote freely the law of levirate marriage as given in Deut. 25:5, 6. But the law had validity only when two brothers were living "on the same family estate" (Driver). There is nothing in the law itself to suggest that it meant to involve every unmarried brother, as the story seems to imply. There is evidence that this law became a dead letter before the days of Jesus (Lev. 20:21). The Sadducees cited an



obsolete law and then proceeded to caricature it by a story. Then, too, the Sadducees misunderstood the idea of resurrection. They assumed that in order to raise the dead, God must raise them up into a life as material as the life men now live in the flesh. They assumed that God could not arrange the relationships of human beings in the future on any other basis nor in any other way than such as prevail necessarily in this life.

Jesus bases the idea of the future existence on the nature of God and not on the nature of the soul of man. Given the fact of God, and the future existence of man follows. Jesus does not discuss the problem propounded on the basis of the materialistic conceptions of the Sadducees. He lifts the question into a different atmosphere of thought. A living God maintains relations with living people alone. If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then these patriarchs are still living. "All live unto him," therefore. The relationship of human beings in the future will be spiritual only. God's power can maintain such an existence apart from physical conditions under which men now exist. So the problem projected by the Sadducees ceases to exist.

## II. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. The necessity of mastering the great fundamental principles of life here and hereafter. The question of tribute was settled on a broad basis of principle. So was that of the Sadducees.
2. The inevitable confusion that comes when men introduce the form of things into the place of the essence. The deeper spiritual relations are everywhere and under all conditions valid and operative.
3. Interjecting obsolete notions into the problems of today causes unnecessary difficulty and produces incalculable harm; e. g., maintaining the scientific accuracy of biblical cosmogony. Ingersolls flourish and thrive when this is done.
4. God is the solution of our practical and also of our speculative questions.

FRANK LEONARD ANDERSON

NORMAL PARK, CHICAGO